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Think-A-Move Awarded Phase III SBIR Contract by the U.S. Army

Think-A-Move, Ltd., a Beachwood, Ohio based company, received a Phase III Small Business Innovation Research contract from the U.S. Army totaling \$340,000 on October 24, 2007. Under this contract, which was issued by the Tank-Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center (TARDEC), Think-A-Move will develop a field-deployable prototype of its hands-free and heads-up system for controlling a military robot, the iRobot PackBot®, with speech commands. The U.S. Army currently utilizes military robots, also known as Unmanned Ground Vehicles, for Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detection and surveillance in Iraq and Afghanistan. Over 1,000 PackBots have been deployed, mainly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Currently no systems use speech commands to control military robots because of their inability to work well in noisy environments. Think-A-Move addresses this problem through its algorithms for ambient noise cancellation, enabling a soldier to effectively use speech commands for robot control.

Today, soldiers control military robots by using joysticks connected to hardened personal computers or through video game controllers. These methods have several drawbacks including limiting the soldier's situational awareness of his environment. In addition, a soldier does not have his hands free to hold a weapon, if necessary, and also requires a security detail to guard him.

Think-A-Move's technology would help overcome these limitations on using military robots, and increase the effectiveness of the soldiers operating them.

Think-A-Move was previously awarded Phase I and Phase II Small Business Innovation Research contracts totaling over \$800,000 by the U.S. Army which demonstrated both the feasibility of this technology and enabled Think-A-Move to begin its development.

Jim Harris, Think-A-Move's President, commented: "This demonstrates the value the Army places on developing a hands-free and heads-up control system for military robots. Think-A-Move's system provides the robot operator with increased situational awareness and potentially decreases the size of the security detail required to guard the operator. This enables the Army to increase the number of soldiers effectively able to engage the enemy. We are very pleased to receive this Phase III contract from TARDEC."

Think-A-Move anticipates that the work under the contract will be completed by September, 2008.

In addition to the application of its technology for military purposes, Think-A-Move is in the process of entering into licensing agreements with strategic partners for other markets including medical devices, voice communications, and enterprise systems.

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